

MEADE

THE SECOND DEATH ILLUSTRATED.

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SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

IN TAUNTON, MASS.

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BY JOHN B. DODS, PASTOR.

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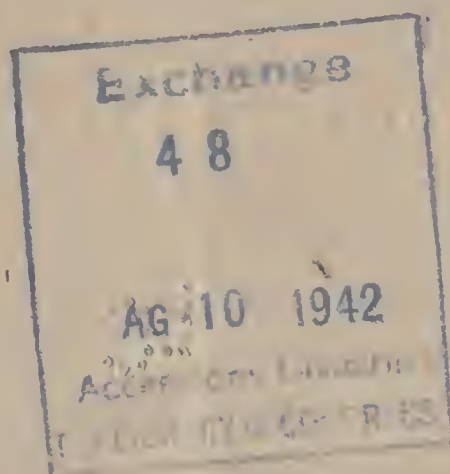
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It is due to the author to state, that he had no time to transcribe the following discourse, which is an apology for the imperfect state in which it is given to the public.



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S E R M O N .



REVELATION XX: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

OUR text involves a subject of no ordinary moment, and with feelings of more than ordinary interest do I approach the extended field of investigation now opening before me. I feel no disposition to trifle with the doctrines of my fellow men, nor with sacred things. I stand not here to wrest the scriptures from their obvious import by any ingenuity of speech, but to make a righteous developement of truth, and thus humbly endeavor to present to my audience the sacred oracles in their naked grandeur.

This text you have with the best of intentions presented me for my consideration, and most cheerfully do I bring it forward for the edification of all sincere inquirers after truth. In doing this I have no wish to disturb others in their honest opinions, nor give them one feeling of distress, while I candidly and solemnly examine those errors in their doctrines which have become so venerable on account of their age, and so sanctified on account of so many good, great and learned men believing them, that to many it may seem

bordering on blasphemy to call those errors in question. But duties, momentous as our existence, and sacred and dear as the strongest ties of *social*, or even *parental affection*, are laid upon us, and these duties we may not forego.

Did I believe the doctrine of endless misery true, I could have no inducement to hide its awfulness from my fellow creatures, or to trifle with my own, or their final destiny. Were that sentiment true, and did I believe it, I would stand before you with other emotions than those that now pervade my bosom. And painful as might be the task, yet with all these dear friends and unsuspecting children around me, I would with a trembling hand draw aside the curtains of the tomb, point you to the future world, and lay open and naked to your mental view, the dark regions of despair, and let you listen to the final groan of hapless millions, and to the roar of that tremendous ocean whose surges are liquid fire, and whose surrounding atmosphere is living flame. Were I satisfied of the truth of this sentiment, then no feelings of friendship, or of fond attachment—no riches, honors, or popularity should keep me one moment where I am. I would sacrifice the whole on the altar of truth, to the omnipotence of which all must sooner or later bow.

We are now about to examine a passage of scripture, classed among those which by many are supposed to teach the doctrine of endless misery. There is probably no phrase in the Book of God, that has been more frequently pronounced by our religious opposers, than the “second death,” or the “lake of fire and brimstone,” when engaged in argument against universal holiness. They consider our text more forcibly to express the awfulness of that doom, which they honestly believe awaits the “finally impenitent” in the future world, than any other in the sacred oracles. So much force have preachers in different ages given to the scripture metaphor—“the lake of fire and brimstone,” that the impression became general of its being a burning world—and the imaginations of thousands have been distracted in contemplating the in-

describable horrors of the scene. For many years it would have been considered impiety to have believed it to be any thing less than an ocean of literal fire and brimstone ; and it is of but recent date that the better informed have substituted the milder phrase—a hell of conscience.

But taking our whole text in connection, it is even in the present day brought forward with a confidence bordering on certainty, that it is unanswerable by Universalists, being, as they suppose, completely at variance with the ultimate salvation of all men. Here they contend it is plainly stated that Christ shall sit upon a great white throne of indescribable splendor—That at the grandeur of the scene the earth and the heavens shall recoil, be suddenly wrapped in flames, pass away with a great noise, and be blotted out forever from the catalogue of existence—That at the same instant the sepulchres of slumbering generations shall give up their dead, and that the undivided attention and the strongest sensibilities of the universe shall be awakened to the interest of that day for which all other days were made—That the whole human family shall then be judged ; and that all those whose names are not written in the book of life, shall be sentenced to endless misery in the future world, which is expressed in the text by a *second death*—a *lake of fire*.

Previous to our noticing the *second death*, we will attempt to show that we have no revelation of such a judgment day, and that the language generally quoted to prove it, has no possible reference to the subject. And here we would remark, that the Egyptians worshipped the sun, moon and other hosts of heaven as the gods that governed the world, and produced all the changes, prosperous or adverse, that took place among men. The man whose life was marked by misfortune, was supposed to have been born under an unlucky planet, which was the god that directed his fate. If a nation suffered conquest, being torn to pieces and captivated, it was represented by all the planets being darkened over the land, or falling from their places, and thus withdrawing their shining.

The Hebrews while in servitude among the Egyptians learned their notions of worship ; and even after they were liberated by Moses, they did homage to the hosts of heaven. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, that when these Hebrews were visited by national judgments, that the Prophets would use the popular language of the day in describing them. The Prophets preserved this eastern mode of figurative expression in all their writings, and so did the Grecians and Romans, and Jesus Christ and his apostles. When judgments were brought upon nations, all the sacred writers represent it under the figure of the sun and moon being darkened and stars falling, and the earth passing away and dissolving. In proof of this, see Isai. xii. chapter, where the Prophet represents the fall of Babylon. “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light ; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. * * Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place,” &c. In the xxiv. and xxxiv. chapters, the Prophet represents the destruction of Tyre and Idumea by the earth and heavens as clean dissolved, as passed away, and fallen to rise no more. Ezekiel, in the xxxii. chapter, describes the fearful fall of Egypt as follows:—“And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark ; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.” See also Joel, ii. chapter. And see the words of Christ, Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., and Luke xxi. chapters. See also 2 Peter, chapter iii. We have now referred to all the passages in the bible, except one, which divines quote to prove the destruction of the earth, sun, moon and stars at the end of time. But you perceive that they all refer to the overturn of governments and the destruction of nations. This is a fact substantiated by the context of those several records, and it is a matter of astonishment to me that

any of them should ever have been brought forward to prove a judgment at the end of time.

We will now introduce the last passage on this subject in the bible, and give you the Comments of Dr. Adam Clark, the most profound scholar that ever wrote in defence of the Methodist doctrine, and show you that we are not alone in our application of such scriptures. Rev. vi. chapter. "And when he had opened the sixth seal, the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Let us now hear Dr. Clark: [*"A great earthquake"*]"—*"A most stupendous change in the civil and religious constitution of the world. If it refer to Constantine the Great, the change that was made by his conversion to christianity, might be very properly represented under the emblem of an earthquake and the other symbols mentioned in this and the following verses. [*"The sun"*]"—The ancient Pagan government of the Roman Empire was totally darkened, and like a black hair sackcloth was degraded and humbled to the dust. [*"The moon"*]"—The ecclesiastical state of the same Empire became as blood, was totally ruined; their sacred rites abrogated, their priests and religious institutions desecrated, their altars cast down, and their temples destroyed, or turned into places for christian worship. [*"The stars of heaven"*]"—The gods and goddesses, the demi-gods and deified heroes of their poetical and mythological heaven, prostrated indiscriminately, lay as useless as the figs, or fruit of a tree shaken down before ripe by a tempestuous wind. [*"And the heavens departed as a scroll"*]"—The whole system of Pagan and idolatrous worship, with all its spiritual, secular and superstitious influence, blasted, shriveled up, and rendered null and void as a parchment scroll when exposed to*

“the action of a strong fire. [*“And every mountain”*]

—All the props, support and dependencies of the Empire, whether regal allies, tributary kings, dependent colonies, or mercenary troops, were moved out of their places, so as to stand no longer in relation to that same Empire, and its worship, support and maintenance as they formerly did. [*“And island,”*]

—The heathen temples with their precincts and enclosures cut off from the common people, and into which none could come but the privileged, may here be represented by islands for the same reasons.”

Dr. Clark would have applied the above to the destruction of Jerusalem, had he not come to the conclusion that the Revelations were written after that event. He however says,—“All these things may literally apply to the final destruction of Jerusalem,” &c. This we believe to be the fact. He then refers to Dr. Dodd, Newton, and Lowman, and shows that they apply such figurative language to the destruction of nations; and in justification of such an application, he refers the reader to the words of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and of our Lord, which we have already noticed.

Perhaps the hearer may now wish to inquire whether he, who sat upon the great white throne, was not the Son of man? We answer it was. Then asks the hearer, does not the text refer to the end of time, and to the literal destruction of the earth and heaven? It does not. We have shown you that all the passages in the bible on which people rely to support that sentiment have no reference to the catastrophe of dissolving worlds. Their contexts will not justify such an application. This may suggest to the mind of the hearer another question.—Is not the coming of the Son of man to judge the world to take place at the destruction of the earth? I answer, we have no such revelation. In proof of this, we will here notice the scripture account of the coming of the Son of man given by Christ himself.

The first passage is in Matt. x. 23. “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.” Matt. xvi. 27, 28. “For the Son of man

shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Mat. xxiv. 30, 44. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. * * * Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." See the corresponding passages, Mark viii. 38; Mark xiii. 26, 30; Luke ix. 26, 27; Luke xxi. 27—32.

We have now referred you to every passage in the New Testament where Jesus speaks of his coming. It is the language of Christ himself, with which, we are not at liberty to trifle. And as he has solemnly declared in every instance that he would come in *that generation*, or in the *life time* of some of the persons he addressed, or *before they had gone over the cities of Israel*, to reward every man according to his works, you and I have no authority to contend that his coming is still future, or confined to some last day when the earth and heaven shall literally pass away, and the whole human family be congregated before him for trial. No—he came in his kingdom nearly eighteen hundred years ago, and put an end to the ceremonial law by destroying the temple consecrated to ceremonial worship, by rendering to the Jewish and other nations according to their works—and by commencing the judgment of the world by his gospel—and his judgment, or reign which then began, is to be continued and pass upon succeeding generations.

We now perceive that there are two principal judgment days revealed in the bible. The first was under the ceremonial law instituted by Moses, which judgment day lasted till it was abolished by the coming of Christ, and then the judgment day under the gospel commenced. This point I believe has been generally overlooked. I would here observe that God is "judge of all the earth," and employs in this work no agent,

only so far as to reveal to men the laws of his kingdom which rule over all. He revealed the laws appertaining to the first dispensation to the Jewish nation through the agency of Moses. And the continued enforcement of these laws was the continued reign or judgment of Moses over the Jews. Consequently, Moses is represented as being among them, and judging. Christ says, "they have Moses and the Prophets"—that is, they had the laws and will, which God revealed to the Jewish nation through the agency of those servants. Again he says,—“Think not that I will accuse you to the Father, for there is one that judgeth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.” We are not to understand by this that Moses, being dead, had any thing to do with the government of the Jews. We are only to understand that God *judged*, or in other words, *ruled* his people for two thousand years by those laws which he had revealed to them by his servant, Moses, who sat as it were upon a throne of judgment among that people.

God, through Christ, revealed to the world the doctrine of life and immortality. He established a dispensation that far exceeded the former in glory. The first was temporal, the second eternal; the first embraced one nation, the second the universe. Christ has taken a glorious throne, and still continues to judge the world by the spirit and truth of his gospel. His reign is the last, and his kingdom shall consume and break in pieces all other kingdoms, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. That Christ received his throne, and commenced the judgment of the world by his gospel at the destruction of the Jewish state, is certain from his own words—“The Son of man is as a man travelling into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and return. And when he was returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded his servants to be called, so that he might reckon with them,” &c. From this it is evident that he commenced the judgment of the world *when he received his kingdom*. And if this judgment is not to take place till the end of time, then till that period Christ will be without a

kingdom. If this be so, then he is as yet no king, nor has he commenced his reign. But as he came in his kingdom before his disciples had “gone over the cities of Israel,” it is certain that he *then* commenced the judgment of the world—he *then* “reckoned with his servants”—and “*then* rewarded every man according to his works”. The *judgment day* under the law by Moses *then* closed, and God is now judging the secrets of men’s hearts by Jesus Christ.

The Prophet says, “he shall not fail, nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth.” Jesus says, “for judgment am I come into the world.” Yes, he declares that “now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world [the Jewish hierarchy] be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” All the rites and ceremonies of the first covenant, which Moses established by the direction of God, were to pass away before the gospel covenant could be established, and the judgment, that is, the reign of Christ commence. Paul says, “he taketh away the *first*, that he may establish the *second*.” And the moment he was seated on his great white throne of gospel purity, the Jewish earth and heaven fled from his face, and there was no place found for them. We now understand the expression,—“Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness”—that is, by the judgment, or reign of Christ, all things in heaven and earth are to be reconciled to God, and God shall be all in all.

Having explained by the scriptures of truth what we are to understand by the earth and heaven passing away, and shown that such language being figurative, was not designed to teach the literal destruction of the earth—and having shown that the coming of Christ in his kingdom has no reference to the end of time, but to the commencement of his reign—and having noticed the scripture doctrine of God’s judging the Jews by Moses under the law, and lastly of his judging the secrets of men’s hearts by Jesus Christ under the Gospel, we now pass on to notice the *second death*, which of course implies a *first*.

In doing this, I shall pursue an untrodden path. On this subject I have had my opinion made up for several years, and on perusing the many expositions given to the public, I have had no occasion to change that opinion.

Our opposers suppose that by the *first* death is meant the death of the body, and by the *second* is meant an eternal death in the future world, which consists in the most exquisite sufferings that the imagination can conceive. It must be granted by all that a second death, not only presupposes a *first*, but implies that it must be of the same character with the *first* death—or that there must at least subsist between them an analogy sufficiently strong to justify the subsequent phrase, *second death*, as relative to its antecedent—a *first death*. But what resemblance is there between the death of the body, which is a total loss of all sensation and pain, and a state of the most exquisite suffering in the immortal world? None at all. Then they do not stand in relation to each other, so as to justify the expression of *first and second death*.

On the other hand, the generally received opinion among Universalists seems to be, that by the *second death* is meant the christian apostacy, which commenced in the days of the Apostles, and which John noticed in his address to the seven churches of Asia. He says, “thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.” Again—“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” Though there is much ingenuity in the arguments adduced in support of this opinion, and not a little plausibility, yet they have never been satisfactory to my mind.

If men should embrace the gospel, fall away, embrace it a second time, and again fall away, it would of course be a second death. It would therefore require a second apostacy from the gospel to make out a second death. They must *twice* lose the same life and *twice* endure the same death. For men, who are dead in trespasses and sins under the law, to embrace the gospel, and then fall back into a state of unbelief, or error, does not make out two deaths of the same

nature, inasmuch as the same gospel life had not been *twice* lost. It is further evident that the christian apostacy is not the second death because John declares in the context—"Blessed and holy is he that hath a part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." By this I understand the believers who were raised from all their trials and persecutions into the full and peaceable enjoyment of Christ's kingdom at the destruction of the Jewish state, and means the same as the words of Jesus—"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" If they had apostatized from the gospel, then in direct opposition to the words of John, they would have had a part in the second death, admitting the second death to have been the christian apostacy. But their "faith was perfected," and their "hearts were established unblameable in holiness before God, even the Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." This is the "time the saints possessed the kingdom"—that "they sat upon thrones and judgment was given them."

We now proceed to show that the *first* and *second* death mean the first and second destruction of the Jews as a nation, which took place at the destruction of their *first* and *second* temple. We will show that the second death is *national*, not *moral*.

God established the Jews, as a nation, in the land of Judea under a government purely religious which constituted their national existence. Their first temple was built by Solomon, and was considered the dwelling place of the Most High, where he more immediately manifested the divine presence and glory to his worshipping people. Though he was said to "dwell between the Cherubims," and to fill that house with his glory, yet they considered him as present throughout the whole land of Judea, directing their national concerns. Their government was a theocracy. On this account they would not admit that God was present among the heathen in such a sense, that they could worship him, or even "sing a song of Zion in a strange land." In the land of Judea *only* could they as a nation live before him, enjoy his presence and worship in

his temple on Zion's hill. When their government was destroyed, and they were led away into captivity among the heathen, they considered themselves as a nation dead before God, and banished from his presence.

That God promised the Jews the continuance of *national* existence and prosperity in the land he had given their fathers in case of their *obedience*, is a subject so obvious to every reader of the Jewish scriptures, that it would be a waste of words to attempt formally to prove it. And that he again and again threatened to cast them out of his presence from the land of Judea, and scatter them among the heathen, in case of their *disobedience*, is also plainly taught.

To throw light on the exposition we are now about to give, we would remark that, when a nation were roused from stupidity to a sense of their impending destruction—when their energies were awakened into intense action by the approaching horrors of war and its attendant calamities, the sacred writers not unfrequently represent it, by the striking figure of being dead and buried in the grave and starting suddenly from its silent bosom to a state of condemnation. And when a nation, or people were in a state of oppression and servile bondage, or persecution, and were suddenly to be brought into a higher state of enjoyment, or to return to their former privileges it was also represented by a resurrection, but it was a resurrection to life. In evidence of this, see John v. 28, 29; and Daniel xii. 2; both of which we shall have occasion to notice hereafter. It may not be improper in this place to introduce some orthodox authority to support our views. Parkhurst says that the Greek word, *anastasis*, translated *resurrection*, which is derived from the verb *anisemi*, signifying *to rise*, has the following signification: “A standing on the feet again, or *rising* as opposed to *falling*”—“a rising, or resurrection of the body from the grave.” Dr. Campbell says that “the phrase, *anastasis ton nekron*, is indeed the common term by which the resurrection, properly so called, is denominated in the New Testament, yet this is neither the *only*, nor the *primitive* import of the word *anastasis*. It denotes sim-

ply being raised from inactivity to action, or from obscurity to eminence, or a *return to such a state* after an interruption. The verb *anisemi* has the like latitude of signification; and both words are used in this extent by the writers of the New Testament as well as by the LXX." in the old. My hearers will please keep the above in mind.

We will now proceed to prove by an appeal to the scriptures that the captivity of the Jews as a nation, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon overturned their government and burnt their *first* temple, is the *first death*. Leviticus xxvi. 39. "And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands, and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them." Ezekiel xxiv. 23. "But ye shall pine away for your iniquities and mourn one towards another." Ezekiel xxxiii. 10, 11. "Therefore O son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, thus speak ye saying: if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how *should we then live?* Say unto them, as I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die O house of Israel?" Here we perceive that they were not to die a *moral* death, for they were already morally dead. And this *moral* death was the very cause that should produce *national* death.

These are a few of the many scriptures we might bring forward to prove that the house of Israel pined away in their iniquities, and died as a nation in the land of their enemies; but these few abundantly establish the fact that the captivity of the Jews among the heathen on *account of their transgressions* was considered a *national* death. They died to all their religious privileges, lost their *national* existence, and pined away in their iniquities in the land of their enemies.

It now remains that we show, that their return to their land at the end of their captivity, when they rebuilt the temple under Cyrus, is represented by a resurrection to *national* life. Ezekiel xxxvii. 3—14. "And he said unto me, son of man can these bones live?"

And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these dry bones; behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. Then said he unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God; behold O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves; and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord."

Thus we see, it is most plainly revealed that when the house of Israel sinned, and became careless and insensible respecting the favors of God and the threatenings of his word, they were suddenly roused from their dreadful slumberings by the approach of the king of Babylon, who burnt their temple, led them into captivity beyond Babylon and held them in bondage seventy years. There they pined away in their

iniquities, and became as a valley of dry bones. They were dead to all their privileges and enjoyments as a nation. Their government was demolished, and their national existence was no more. They were not only dead in this sense, but in their graves, and buried. They hung their harps in mournful silence upon the willows along the cold streams of Babylon, and exclaimed, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land!" But their bones were gathered, flesh came upon them, their graves were opened, the earth gave up its dead, and they were brought into the land of their fathers, their temple was rebuilt by order of Cyrus, their theocratical government was established, and they lived once more as a nation before God.

We are now to prove that the events recorded in our text took place at the destruction of their second temple, when their government was again demolished, and they as a nation were destroyed and dead before God.

In order to bring this part of our subject plainly before you, we shall have to make a pretty extensive appeal to the scriptures; and I harbour but little doubt, that I shall abundantly satisfy my hearers of the correctness of my views on the second death.

The Jews, though subject to the Romans, were nevertheless permitted to enjoy their own theocratical government, and all their modes of worship in the temple. John xviii. 31. "Then said Pilate unto them, take ye him and judge him according to *your law*. John xix. 7. "The Jews answered him, we *have a law*, and by *our law* he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." From these scriptures it is evident that the Jews had a government distinct from the Romans. But they had killed the true prophets, made void the law of God through their traditions, worshipped idols, and made their children pass through the fire to Molock in the valley of Hinnam. They were filling up the measure of their fathers, the day of vengeance was approaching when all the blood shed upon the earth from Abel to Zacharias should come upon that generation. Blind to approaching ruin, they slept as it were in carnal security in the grave of in-

iquity and darkness, were dead before God in their sins, and rejected their promised Messiah.

From this state of security and blindness, they were to be suddenly roused to a state of national condemnation and death at the coming of Jesus Christ in his kingdom, which was at the destruction of their second temple, when Titus, the son of Vespasian, led the Roman army against them, demolished their government, and led them captive among all nations. This was their *second death*, called a lake of fire. God's judgments upon the Jews, we will presently show, were represented by fire.

We will first establish the fact, by concurrent scripture testimony, that our text has reference to the *second* scattering of the holy people at the destruction of the *second* temple, when the daily sacrifice, there offered up, should be taken away. Daniel ii. 44. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Here is proof positive that the *mediatorial kingdom* was set up in the days of the Roman kings, and of *that kingdom* Christ *then* took the throne. Let us now examine if the opening of the books and the judgment mentioned in our text, did not *then* take place. Daniel vii. 9—14. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the *judgment was set*, and the *books were opened*. I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion,

which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

In the language of the Prophet above quoted, there can arise no misapprehension as to the time when this judgment should set. He plainly declares that it should be at a time when the kingdom should be given to the Son of man—when he should commence his reign—that then the judgment should set, and the books be opened. This is almost in the language of our text.

Now, it is certain that this language of the Prophet can have no reference whatever to a general resurrection of the literally dead, nor to a judgment day at the end of time; for all denominations grant, that Christ, instead of receiving his kingdom at the immortal resurrection, and *then* commencing his reign, will deliver up his kingdom and terminate his reign. And in support of it, they adduce the words of Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 24. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.” How, then, “in the name of common sense,” can the judgment in our text, and the opening of the books, have the least possible reference to what people call the last judgment day? To contend for this, is not only flying in the face of scripture, but is contradictory to their own opinions. If our text refer to a fancied judgment at the end of time, then Christ cannot receive a kingdom, nor be crowned king till that period arrives; still they grant that he now possesses a kingdom, and is himself king of kings. But we have proved that the judgment, referred to in our text, was at the commencement of his reign, when he received his kingdom, (thirty-seven years after his resurrection,) and not at the termination of his reign.

But we are not yet done—we carry our subject still further, guided by the lamp of unerring truth. We will now show you that not only the judgment, and the delivery of those whose names were written in the book, referred to in our text, but the resurrection took place when the Jews, called the holy people, were scattered, and when the daily sacrifice, at the destruc-

tion of their temple, was taken away. John v. 28, 29. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." But, says the hearer, has not this passage reference to the last judgment day, when all shall rise immortal and be judged? It has not; neither is there a passage in the Book of God that teaches a judgment beyond the immortal resurrection of the human family. That this scripture has reference to the deliverance of the Jewish christians, who were to be raised from all their persecutions and sufferings to an elevated state of honor, life and enjoyment at the destruction of the Jewish state—that it refers to the persons whose names were written in the book of life, and who had a part in the "first resurrection," called "the resurrection of the just," and over whom "the *second death* had no power"—that it refers to these on the one hand, and to the unbelieving Jews on the other, who were roused from their dark hiding places of security to condemnation, and consigned to a *second* national death—that this scripture has reference to *that period*, and to those *two classes* of character, we will substantiate by the oracles of truth. Daniel xii. chapter. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time shall thy people be delivered, every one that shall be found *written in the book*. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." That this is a parallel passage with that in John, is, I believe, denied by none.

Here, then, we learn, that they were to start out of the dust, and that all those whose names were found written in the book of life, were to be *delivered*, and the rest *condemned*, at a period when "there shall be a time of trouble, such as there never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." And Christ

himself, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, says, (Mat, xxiv. 21)—“For then shall there be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

But let us read on further in Daniel, xii. chapter. “Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” [By the *wonders*, he means the time of trouble, the delivery of those who are written in the book, and the awaking of those who sleep in the dust of the earth. Let us, then, hear the answer to this question.] “And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swear by him that liveth forever, that it shall be for a time, times and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” [Here, then, this heavenly messenger has made solemn oath, that these dead are to awake out of the dust, and that all whose names are written in the book, are to be delivered at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Jews, the holy people, were scattered. Is this angel a false witness? God forbid. But we are not yet done with this point. We will read on, and pile evidence on evidence, and let you hear a greater than this messenger settle the question.] “And I heard, but I understood not; then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up, and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Let us now appeal to the words of Christ, and hear him settle the question. Mat. xxiv. 15, 16. “When

ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains." Now here Jesus calls Daniel by name, quotes his words, and points us forward to the destruction of Jerusalem for their fulfilment. The point is then settled that this resurrection, and the deliverance of those written in the book, took place in the generation Christ addressed, and when the holy people were scattered.

By the sea giving up the dead, and death and hell delivering up the dead in them, we are to understand that no dark devices, nor secret hiding places could protect the Jewish nation from that impending judgment which God in his counsels had determined to bring upon them. Their national powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places, were to be made manifest to all. They said in their hearts, [Isai. xxviii. 15]—"We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." But though they had thus secreted themselves, yet *death* and *hell* delivered them up to national destruction. Verse 18, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall ye be trodden down by it." Amos ix. 3. "And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." The above language is used in reference to the living, who are represented as hiding themselves under falsehood and lies—as taking refuge in the bottom of the sea, and as making a covenant with death and hell, to protect them from national ruin, but all in vain; our text says, they were given up, judged out of the books, [the books of the law,] and cast into the *second death*. They were dead in sin; and this *moral* death exposed them to *national* death. "If ye believe

not (says Jesus,) that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." This certainly cannot mean that they should, in the future tense, die a *moral* death. They were already *morally* dead. But it means—in the same sinful condition you now are, you shall die a *national* death, because you believe not that I am he. To believe in Christ, who is himself the word of eternal life, is to have our names written in the book of life. Consequently, all the believing Jews escaped the second death, to which they, as a nation, were doomed. They fled, according to the directions of Christ, to the mountains of Judea for safety, till the dreadful siege was over. Not a solitary christian perished in that destruction.

The hearer will bear in mind, that the second death and the lake of fire are used synonymous in our text. We will here show, that God's judgments are not unfrequently represented by the figure of fire. Ezekiel xxii. 19—22. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem, as they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you; yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." Here you perceive that Jerusalem is represented to be a fiery furnace, in which they were to be melted as metal. But by reading the chapter you may learn that it has reference to their overthrow as a nation, and their dispersion among the heathen. We will produce one more instance, where the scriptures represent a nation in their destruction as having their land turned into a lake of fire. Isaiah xxxiv. 8—10. "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of the recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become

burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever and ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever." Here we perceive that the dust of the land is represented as turned into brimstone, and all its streams as rolling forth floods of boiling pitch, and yet it means nothing more than the temporal judgment of God upon that people.

Our text is plain, we presume, to every hearer, and we now dismiss the subject. In conclusion, we simply inquire are the Jews to remain in this second death? Let Paul answer. Romans xi. Chapter. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but *life from the dead*" * * *. "For I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits) that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins."

Here we have evidence that these dead are again to be brought to life. They are to come forth from their graves—the dark veil shall be rent from their eyes, and "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

From this lamentable catastrophe of their overthrow and dispersion, and their present unhappy fate as a people, let us take warning, and not abuse the choice blessings God has bestowed upon us as a nation. Let us rightly value our civil and religious liberty, and remember if we become corrupt as a people, and unmindful of that Being, who holds the destinies of nations in his hand, we too shall be hurled from our high station of honor to degradation and ruin. Ever bear in mind, that moral death is a sad prelude to national death.

*Mrs Mary R. Bell from
friend C. C.*

THE CHURCH TO BE PERFECTED,

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A S E R M O N,

Preached at the Ordination of

REV. ANDREW BIGELOW,

IN SOUTH DARTMOUTH, *Mass.*

AUGUST 25, 1841,

~~~~~

BY REV. ASAHEL BIGELOW,

Pastor of the Orthodox Congregational Church in Walpole, Mass.

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NEW-BEDFORD:

PRESS OF BENJAMIN LINDSEY.

1841.

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At a meeting of the First Congregational Church in Dartmouth,
August 25th, 1841 —

Resolved, That the thanks of this Church be returned to the Rev. ASAHEL BIGELOW for his very able and appropriate Sermon, delivered at the ordination of the Rev. ANDREW BIGELOW in that place, and that a copy be requested for publication — Upon motion,

Resolved, That T. Thomas and I. C. Thacher, be a Committee to communicate this Resolution to the Rev. ASAHEL BIGELOW.

Rev. ASAHEL BIGELOW,

Dear Sir — We take pleasure in communicating the enclosed Resolution, and to express our desire that you will comply with the request of the Church — hoping that when published it will be beneficial and useful to the community at large.

Very Respectfully, your obedient servants,

THACHER THOMAS, }
ISAIAH C. THACHER } *Committee.*

South Dartmouth, August 25th, 1841.

Messrs. THOMAS AND THACHER,

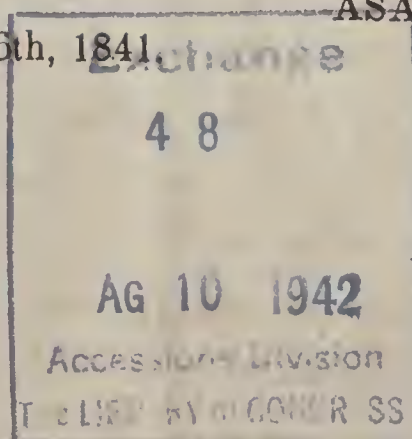
Dear Brethren — Your official communication, embodying a Resolution of the Church in this place, and requesting a copy of a Sermon, preached at the Ordination of my brother, was received last evening.

The Sermon was not designed for the press, but if, in your estimation it will be beneficial to yourselves or others in advancing the great interest of the Church, I cannot refuse a compliance with your request; a copy therefore, will be committed to your disposal.

Yours Respectfully,

ASAHEL BIGELOW.

Dartmouth, Aug. 26th, 1841.



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S E R M O N .

EPHESIANS iv: 13.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

THE present life is a state of imperfection. Scarcely any thing in human affairs has reached a point beyond which there can be no improvement. Inventions and discoveries are almost daily made in the arts and sciences. The principles of government and their various applications, are undergoing important changes. Intercourse among the nations, and between different parts of the same nation, is rapidly increasing. Civilization is on the advance; and the world is expecting a brighter, happier period than it has ever enjoyed. And there is something with respect to divine institutions corresponding with this progress in human affairs. The former dispensation, compared with the gospel, was quite imperfect. “For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” Nor is all perfection even under the gospel. They who enjoy its richest blessings and are most fully under its enlightening, redeeming influences, are looking forward to a better state. “For the

earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Christians individually have not attained, and the church as a body is not already perfect. For the Apostle speaks in the name of the Church, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." This implies that the Church is yet to be perfected. Accordingly your attention is invited to some particulars in which, and to the means by which, the Church is yet to be perfected.

With respect to religious knowledge the Church is yet to be perfected. She comes far short of a thorough understanding of the gospel in all its truths, bearings, and relations, and is yet to make important advances in the knowledge of spiritual things. This is implied in the text. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man. The knowledge of the Son of God, or of Christ, is knowledge of what he revealed respecting his own character, office, and work as Saviour; the character, government, and will of God; the character and duty of man; the immortality of the soul and eternal retribution; in short, all the truths connected with the gospel. The knowledge which christians have of these truths is in no case perfect during the present life. Every one, at all acquainted with himself, is sensible of this. The more one studies and understands the gospel, the more conscious is he of ignorance respecting it. For, every time he comes to the investigation of it, new truths, or new views of the same truths, present themselves, so that he is led more and more to admire the depth of its riches and wisdom. And if there are those who imagine their knowledge of the gospel complete, it is they whose religious information is quite

limited. They are like one who, viewing a landscape at a distance, thinks he has a perfect perception of it. But let him approach, enter upon, and attempt to survey it, and he is soon convinced that his first impressions were very incomplete. And if they, who imagine their religious knowledge perfect, should commence a thorough investigation of the gospel, they would soon find themselves in a field of which they could see no limits; and would be disposed to say with the chief of the Apostles, "Now we see through a glass darkly," "Now we know in part." But the time shall come when christians shall see face to face, and know even as they are known. They shall grow in grace and in the *knowledge of the Lord* till, with respect to knowledge, they shall be perfect men, possessing correct views of the gospel in all its parts and relations.

As a consequence of this perfection in knowledge christians will have completeness, unity, of faith. The reason why they are not now one in religious belief is, that their religious knowledge is imperfect. None have a full perception of the truths of the gospel in all their connexions, and bearings. But the knowledge of some is more complete than that of others. These different degrees of knowledge in different individuals, and this imperfection of knowledge in the case of all, are necessarily the occasion of more or less difference with respect to religious belief. But, when the knowledge of all shall be complete, they will alike see and believe the truths of the gospel; and, believing the same truths, they will have unity of faith. Objects, viewed by twilight, are seen indistinctly, and different individuals agree not respecting them. But, when the day has fully risen, all is made manifest and agreement follows of course. So, when, with respect to religious knowl-

edge, "that which is perfect is come," then this partial union of religious belief will be done away.

Another particular, in which the church is yet to be perfected, is holiness. That she has not yet attained, neither is already perfect, is obvious to others if not to herself. When contemplated as a body, she exhibits many imperfections. And if the members of which she is composed are examined individually, none are found without blemish. Let the thoughts, feelings, and actions of any one be impartially tried by the demands of either the law or the gospel, and he will be found wanting. And probably there are none acquainted with their own hearts, who cannot say, at least occasionally, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin."

But the church will not always be thus imperfect. It will at length come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. This is his purpose respecting it. For he "gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." To this perfect degree of holiness the church of Christ will ultimately arrive. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

At present the church is not complete as to its members. This is another particular in which it is yet to be perfected. When complete, the church will consist of individuals gathered from all the generations of men, which shall have lived from the beginning to the end of time. Some will be still alive when Christ shall come at the end of the world. "We shall not all sleep,

but we shall be changed.” “We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of our Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” This shows that christians will be living when Christ shall come at the close of time. Consequently, the church will not be complete, all its members will not be gathered in, till this period shall have arrived. Then it will be perfect. Then we *all* shall have come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man. Then the body, having received all its members, will be complete.

Thus it appears that the church is yet to be perfected in knowledge, holiness, and with respect to members. The process by which this perfection is to be attained is gradual. None, on becoming christians are at once made perfect. Nor, at any subsequent period, is their knowledge at once completed by special revelation made to them. Neither are any perfected in holiness by miraculous influence exerted upon them. But the attainment of both knowledge and holiness is progressive. “The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Christians “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.” “They are to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection.” As one, during a course of years, grows up from infancy to manhood, so the church advances from lower to higher degrees of spiritual attainment. Each individual is making progress. All her members are in a course of transformation, and will become so fashioned and spirit-

ualized that, when the whole church shall come together in the future world, the body will be complete, harmonious, a glorious church.

The church will then be perfect in knowledge. Not that she will know at once all she *ever* will know. She will doubtless continue to increase in knowledge during eternity. But, on arriving at heaven, her knowledge of spiritual things will be complete, harmonious. She will not understand one part of the great scheme of redemption and be ignorant of another, but will have a comprehensive, correct view of all its parts, each being seen in its true light and regarded according to its real importance.

The church will continue to advance in holiness during eternity. Still, on arriving at heaven, she will be perfect in holiness in the sense that she will be free from sin. Some of her exercises will not be holy and others sinful, but all will be holy, so that her holiness, though limited in degree, will be complete. There will be no alloy, no mixture of sin, no spot, no blemish. Towards this point the church is gradually advancing; one member after another is coming in; each is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, and, ultimately, we shall all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man.

But by what means is this happy result to be attained? The truths of the gospel, received in faith and habitually contemplated, are the means by which the church is to be perfected. For the way in which one becomes complete in knowledge, is by studying and meditating upon the truth in its various parts and relations. In this way the plan of redemption becomes intelligible, and is seen to be appropriate. The way too, in which one becomes complete in holiness is, by obtaining adequate

views of the gospel, receiving it in faith, and yielding to its full influence. The gospel thus received and applied by the holy spirit, produces correct intellectual views and right feelings of heart, or becomes effectual to sanctification. Agreeably, it was the prayer of Christ, "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now the means, which make the individual member complete in knowledge and holiness, are those which render the whole body complete. And the means by which the church is to be perfected with respect to members are the same. They are the truths of the gospel made effectual by the Holy Spirit. All that have been connected with the church hitherto have been gathered to it in this way. They were convinced of sin and converted by the truth attended with divine influence. They were "begotten through the gospel."—"Saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." These means will continue working effectually till the church, having received her members from the last generation of men that shall exist, shall be complete.

But, to accomplish this result, there must be instrumentality as well as means. This Christ has provided. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. This shows that Christ provided instrumentality expressly to effect the object we are contemplating—to bring the church to a state of perfection in point of knowledge, holiness and members. For he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists,

teachers, for the *perfecting of the saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the *body of Christ*. And this instrumentality was designed to be permanent, to continue operating till the above object should be fully accomplished, till the church should be in all respects complete,—till we *all* come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man. To accomplish this object the above instrumentality is obviously necessary. In other words, the gospel ministry, thoroughly furnished by *grace* and by *education*, is necessary to perfect the church in the several particulars now considered.

It is necessary to perfect the church in religious knowledge. The fact, that Christ *instituted* it for this purpose is evidence of its necessity. For, had it been needless, he, being infinite in wisdom, would not have instituted it. But we are not dependent upon *inference*, or *faith* merely for evidence of its necessity. This necessity is so obvious that we can *see* it. That the gospel ministry should be furnished by *grace*, holiness, experimental knowledge of the truth, none can doubt. For, if the blind lead the blind, all foresee the result. And that, in order to perfect the church in knowledge, the gospel ministry must be furnished by education, is scarcely less plain. For christians, on becoming such, are infants in spiritual knowledge, and are exhorted “as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.” The word, the truth, the gospel, in all its parts and relations, its doctrines and precepts, must come before their mind if they would grow in knowledge till they arrive at the stature of men. Now it is true that, by reading, meditation, personal research, all can make desirable attainments. But that, without religious instruction, christians will not continue advancing in knowledge so as to make

those *high* attainments which they should make, is quite evident. Observation makes it plain. It is now seen, and has ever been seen, that individuals and churches, who avail not themselves of competent religious instruction, make but very little intellectual progress. They grow up to manhood with respect to age but remain children in knowledge.

But competent religious instruction cannot be imparted except by such as have first been thoroughly instructed. And here is a principle universally admitted in relation to all temporal pursuits. None can adequately teach the mechanic arts, agriculture, manufactures, literature, till they themselves have been taught. And is the knowledge of spiritual things — of things pertaining to the divine government, to eternity — things into which angels desire to look — so much more easily obtained that all may not only acquire it without effort, but adequately communicate it to others? God, in his dealings with man has never proceeded upon this principle. For, when he made this promise to his people, “I will take you one of a city and two of a family, and bring you to Zion,” he further promised — “I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” And when he would “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” he sent “Elijah the prophet” to do it. When Christ ascended up on high, he left a ministry miraculously furnished for the edification of the church. And Paul, in his instructions to Timothy, as a religious teacher, says, “Meditate upon these things: give thyself *wholly to them*, that thy profiting may appear to all.” From all this it is plain that the gospel ministry, in order to feed the church with knowledge, must itself be

furnished with knowledge : plain too, that God designed it should be thus furnished.

Besides, christians in general are very much on a level, as to their knowledge of the truths and doctrines of religion and of their various connexions, relations, bearings. One, therefore can receive little instruction from another. There may be mutual exhortation and encouragement given but little progress will be made in knowledge. If, therefore, instead of securing the services of a competent religious teacher, christians rely either upon one another or upon an illiterate ministry for instruction, they may pass continually round through a limited circle of truths, but will not go on unto perfection. And christians will not remain satisfied in these circumstances. For mind is progressive, expansive, and must have something to fill its growing capacities. Therefore, where they avail not themselves of an educated ministry, their interest in public religious services soon declines. No “scribe instructed unto the kingdom brings forth out of his treasure things *new*,” for the want thereof the mind turns to the world for something to fill its “aching void,” and christians are at best *stationary* in their course.

But this is not all. Without adequate religious instruction, christians are wanting in stability. They have not sufficient confidence in their religious belief, but are easily drawn away by what is *new* or *marvellous*, “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Now apostles speak of “continuing in the faith grounded and settled,” and pray for christians that “God would make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them.” It was for this, in fact, that Christ instituted the Gospel ministry. He gave apostles pastors, teachers, “for the work of the ministry, for

the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." It is obvious that, in establishing a thoroughly furnished ministry to prevent these evils, Christ wisely consulted the wants of the church. For christians, well instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, are comparatively immoveable. They have confidence in their belief, are conscious of having an intelligible, sure foundation, and can "give a reason of the hope that is in them." They can distinguish between truth and error, reality and delusion, and therefore remain firm in times of trial, when others are "like waves of the sea, driven with the winds and tossed." Besides, the church needs the *defence* of a thoroughly furnished ministry. For *depraved*, educated mind is arrayed against her, aiming at her destruction, and must be met by mind *sanctified*, educated, having clear intellectual perceptions of truth, and knowing experimentally its appropriateness and power.

The gospel ministry, thoroughly furnished by grace and by education, is necessary to perfect the church in holiness. For she is to be sanctified through the truth : — the truths of the gospel made effectual by the Holy Spirit. Agreeably, christians are said to "have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." But, if the church is to be perfected in holiness by means of the truth, then must she come to the knowledge of the truth. The doctrines of the gospel must be presented to her mind in their fulness, at proper seasons, in just order, in suitable degrees, and in a clear light, so that, truth shall be made to act upon the mind

and heart appropriately.—The *whole system* of revealed truth — not merely some parts of it — for it is all designed to aid in and is essential to the perfecting of the saints. They are to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord,” and cannot make progress in the one and not in the other. The end, which is holiness, cannot be attained without the means, which are knowledge, truth. It is only when the *whole field* of revealed truth is laid open to the view of christians that they have just perceptions of what is required of them, and of the motives which excite to holy obedience. It is under the influence of these *adequate*, vivid impressions of the gospel, that they go on unto perfection. It is while “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

But who that is not thoroughly furnished for the work, is able to make such exhibitions of the truth? Who, that doth not both know the truth experimentally and make the study of it his chief employ? Even Paul, with his fervent spirit, his accomplished education, and his miraculous gifts, exclaims, in view of the responsible, arduous undertaking, “Who is sufficient for these things.”

The gospel ministry, thoroughly furnished, is also necessary to perfect the church with respect to members. For the church is to be composed of individuals gathered from all the generations of men that have lived and shall live, and the instrumentality, employed in advancing it to its present state, is that which shall be employed in gathering in its remaining members. None other has been provided; nor will any other be provided. For, when Christ commissioned his apostles to go and preach the gospel to every creature, he instituted a ministry which he designed should continue

till redemption should be complete. Accordingly, he said to them, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This assurance implies that Christ intended his apostles should have successors in the ministry, qualified for their work, with whom he would be, and by whose instrumentality he would gather in his people from age to age till the close of time. This succession in the ministry he has furnished and continued up to the present period. It is the chief human agency by which he has been gathering and edifying the church : and he will continue it till the church shall be complete, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

From what has now been said it follows that, in sustaining a pious, educated ministry, the church exercises wisdom. For she is yet imperfect and needs to advance in spiritual attainments. This is essential to her enjoyment, her usefulness, her complete preparation for heaven. For, unless she make all the progress in knowledge and holiness of which she is capable, she can neither enjoy all which it is her privilege to enjoy, nor exert in favor of the world's salvation all the influence it is her duty to exert ; nor can she enter into the kingdom of God under as favorable circumstances as she might. For, in his kingdom there will be degrees of glory corresponding with present holiness and usefulness. "For one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." But the ministry thoroughly furnished, is a principal means by which the church is to be advanced in spiritual attainments. It was instituted for this purpose ; and the condition of those christians

who enjoy it, compared with that of others, shows its importance. For their progress is actually greater. They have ascended higher in the path which shineth more and more; have more enlarged views; more extended prospects; a more stable, consistent piety; a more intelligible, satisfactory ground of hope. All their circumstances, temporal and spiritual, show that the maintenance of an adequate ministry is not vain.

But all the benefits resulting from the ministry are not, at present, realized. For this is the instrumentality by which the church is to be sustained and piety transmitted from generation to generation, so that instead of the fathers shall be their children through all coming ages till the church, having received all her members, shall be complete. Therefore it is not fruitless to sustain a thoroughly furnished ministry. I know there are those who assert the contrary.—Those who decry the ministry as a departure from christian simplicity, an invention of man, a combination for selfish purposes, an engine of oppression, an obstacle to reform, a hindrance to the advancement of Christ's kingdom. But this is nothing new. It is only a repetition of what has been. As, in the natural world, there are bodies which periodically appear, blaze a while, and pass away; so, from the commencement of christianity, there have been associated errorists, bodies, which, moving in quite eccentric orbits, have periodically appeared in the moral heavens, aiming, by their own excess of brightness, to eclipse and cast into perpetual shade that steady light which, through every age has been shedding upon the world its benign radiance. And they have had influence:—have attracted notice. The multitude has gone out to gaze. But while they were in the attitude of expectation, anticipating marvellous light, these self-illuminated bodies, more like meteors than like comets,

have passed away, leaving them in darkness more gross and disastrous than before. And now, in their disappointment and gloom, they have turned to the permanent institutions of Christ, to the organized church sustaining a pious, educated ministry;—to this divinely constituted and divinely *styled* “light of the world” they have turned, convinced that, under God, it is the only sufficient medium of intelligence and salvation for lost, benighted man.

Experience has shown that to sustain the ministry of reconciliation is not vain. And experience will yet show it;—the experience of coming generations;—the united, joyful experience of “the general assembly and church of the first born” complete in glory;—they, sitting upon the heavenly hills and reviewing all the way in which they were led through the scenes of time, will remember with delight, and everlasting gratitude, that it pleased God “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed.”

It follows from this discourse that to be a minister of the gospel is a privilege and an honor. Not that it secures either worldly treasure, distinction or applause; nor because it is a post of ease. On the contrary, the faithful minister of Christ must endure self-denial, bear the world’s neglect, submit to trials and discouragements, and labor on till worn out with care and service. Still he enjoys a high privilege; for he is producing effects happy and lasting. He is employed in perfecting the church of Christ; and as he sees it advancing in knowledge, holiness, joy, and increasing by the addition of such as shall be saved; as he sees member after member brought to maturity and gathered to their rest as shocks of corn in their season, and, in thought, follows them along the ages of a blessed immor-

tality—as he contemplates these happy, enduring effects of his labors, he enjoys a satisfaction unknown to the world and would not exchange conditions with the most distinguished of earth's favorites.

Nor is the ministry of reconciliation merely a privilege. It is an honor. The faithful minister is a “worker together” with Christ and God: and, to be associated with God in accomplishing any of his works of benevolence, however small, is an honor. But the gospel ministry is an instrumentality which God is employing for the accomplishment of his noblest work. By it he is edifying and will perfect the church; is carrying forward and will complete the work of redemption. This is a work of unrivalled importance and grandeur; for it deeply involves the glory of God. It occupied his mind from eternity, and is the great object in subserviency to which, the world was made, and to which all the distinguished events of time have referred. It is the object for which “God was manifest in the flesh,” the cross endured, angels sent forth as ministering spirits.—The object for which “all nature stands, and stars their courses move.” In short, it is Jehovah's greatest work, that upon which he relies for the fullest, most illustrious display of his glory. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the *church* the manifold wisdom of God.” The church, “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear son,” will be an object of unrivalled interest, and will stand eternally as a monument illustrating the “exceeding greatness of his power, and the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” And when this great work, this spiritual building, shall have been perfected; when the top stone shall have been laid with shouting, and it

stands complete, the admiration of the universe, will it be no honor to have been instrumental in fitting and polishing even *one* of the lively stones of which it will be composed ?

My Dear Brother, yours are the privilege and the honor of bearing a part in the accomplishment of this glorious work : — a privilege, an honor, to which angels aspire. And if, amidst the arduous labors before you, and the scenes of trial and discouragement through which you will be called to pass, you should be inclined to despondency, let the thought, that you are a worker together with God in accomplishing the object nearest his heart ; an object, which is, and ultimately will *appear to be*, the greatest, most benevolent, glorious, that ever occupied even the divine mind ; — let this thought sustain, cheer, animate you. Consider “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Think of “the recompense of the reward.” And may such be your fidelity and success that this reward shall be great ; — such that you shall at length “shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.”



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